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ABSTRACT

A study was based on a perceived need for creative writing improvement. A creative writing program was administered to three separate schools in two districts over an eight-week time period. The first district was in a middle class community with primarily White students. The other district was in a lower middle class community with primarily Black students. The target group was made up of two first grades and one fourth grade. Evidence of the need for improvement was shown through: a student survey, which showed a lack of interest and poor student attitudes; and teacher reports, indicating that teachers could not devote enough time to creative writing. Students were given a pre- and post-survey. Surveys suggested that there was a need for creative writing strategies and growth in length and fluency. A checklist was used to observe writing behaviors during the eight-week time frame. Solution strategies were adopted from research literature, combined with classroom experience. The two major interventions consisted of an emphasis on creative writing and implementation of a series of creative writing strategies. In addition, daily oral language, brainstorming, shared writing experience, and portfolios were utilized. Post-intervention data indicated an increase in creative writing skills. Students have become more fluent writers, with an increased understanding of creative writing. (Contains 15 references. Appendixes contain the surveys, sample creative writing lessons, creative writing rubrics, and the checklist. (SR)

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IMPROVING CREATIVE WRITING

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Facility of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University and IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Masters Program
Chicago, Illinois

May, 1998

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We would like to dedicate this book . . .

"Who dares to teach must never cease to learn."

-John Cotton Dana

This quote has provided us the motivation to participate in this program. We believe that each day provides everyone with a learning experience, yet we desire to seek further knowledge through this Masters Program. We perceive this opportunity as fortunate. We feel that we have grown as people and educators through our new wisdom. We would like to thank our families for their continual support throughout the last two challenging years. Thanks to them we have had a wonderful experience participating in this program!

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ABSTRACT

This study was based on a perceived need for creative writing improvement. A creative writing program was administered to three separate schools in two districts during an eight week time period. The first district consists of a middle class community with primarily white students. The other district consists of a lower middle class community with primarily black students. The targeted group is made up of two first grades and one fourth grade.

Evidence of the need for improvement is shown through a variety of techniques. One technique is the student survey, which shows a lack of interest and poor student attitude. Teachers also reported that they cannot devote enough time to creative writing. Students were given a pre and post survey. These surveys suggested that there was a need for creative writing strategies and growth in length and fluency. A checklist was used to observe writing behaviors during the eight week time frame.

Solution strategies were adopted from research literature, combined with classroom experiences. The two major interventions consisted of an emphasis on creative writing and implementation of a series of creative writing strategies. In addition, Daily Oral Language, brainstorming, shared writing experience, and portfolios were utilized.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in creative writing skills. The students have become more fluent writers. The students have an increased understanding of creative writing.

CHAPTER 1

Problem Statement

The students of the targeted first and fourth grade classes show a need for writing improvement. The students will be given a pre test to demonstrate their writing ability. The students will keep a writing folder to reveal their growth.

Immediate Problem Context

School A is one of five elementary schools and one junior high school in a metropolitan area. School A is a forty-five year old, one floor building set on one full city block. The building has twenty-three classrooms, four special education offices, one reading recovery classroom/office, library, computer lab, and gym. School A's staff consists of thirty-two female teachers.

School A has an outstanding Parent Teacher Association (PTA). They supply funds and programs for the school. The Parent Teacher Association is a worthwhile organization to the community. The PTA provides the students with informative assemblies, appreciation in art presentations, Battle of the Books program for third through sixth grade students, and first aid program for grades kindergarten through six. The parent volunteers facilitate with fund raisers, hot lunch programs, and social events

throughout the school year. The PTA is a commendable club, and a wonderful attribute to School A.

School B is one of five elementary buildings and one junior high school in its district. The building consists of twenty three classrooms, two special education pull-out rooms, two Reading Recovery rooms, a Title I office, library, computer lab, music room, and two gymnasiums. School B has thirty female teachers and three male teachers on staff.

The first grade team uses a variety of teaching styles. The strategies include teacher directed methods, cooperative groups, multiple intelligences, and individualized instruction. Two thematic units have been developed that are cross-curricular. The Gingerbread Unit utilizes trade books, filmstrips, videos, and manipulatives for instruction. The study of Caterpillars and Butterflies includes the harvesting of caterpillars and the process that takes place.

School B has a very active Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A.). The P.T.A. provides the school with many programs. The parent volunteers coordinate and assist the schools hot lunch program, read-a-loud, and picture person. The P.T.A. also provides the school with assemblies and social events. The P.T.A. is a very positive part of the community and support to the staff.

Schools A and B are located in the same district, and share some characteristics. The district uses Houghton Mifflin for reading/language/ spelling for first through sixth grade; Heath for reading/language/spelling for kindergarten; Macmillan/McGraw Hill for mathematics for first through sixth

grade; Scott, Foresman for science for third through sixth grade; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich for social studies for third through sixth grade; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich for English for third through sixth grade; and MacMillan Phonics workbook for first through second grade. The district has a library of videos and filmstrips available to the staff members.

Schools A and B have a gifted program called WINGS, which emphasize Language Arts. WINGS is a push in program in grades two through five. The sixth grade program is a pull out program. The WINGS instructors are certified gifted teachers employed by the district. The purpose of the program is to provide the students with opportunity for an enrichment curriculum. The push in program helps the WINGS committee discover the gifted. The criteria for the sixth grade pull out program is as follows: teacher recommendation, achievement test scores, and report card grades. A group of students which are the top five percent are selected for the sixth grade pull out WINGS program with enrichment activities in the cross related subject areas. These students meet twice a week for forty-five minutes. The sixth grade pull out program gathers during the regular reading/language arts block, and the students are expected to complete the work they are missing. There are meetings with the teachers and the WINGS instructor to avoid overload with homework. The students are not graded for their performance in the WINGS program. The sixth grade instructor provides a checklist assessment report to be placed in the report card of the participating students. The

district is in the planning stages of a mathematics gifted program.

Schools A and B has a special education program for students with learning disabilities, behavior disorders, and Educable Mentally Handicapped. Currently, the students with special needs are included into the regular curriculum. Students with more severe disabilities are instructed on an individual basis in an area outside of the regular education classroom. The students who are included receive adapted assignments and tests to meet their individual needs. There is a pull out Transitional Program Instruction for students with English as a second language. The district also employs a speech pathologist from the local special education cooperative to service students with language deficiencies. Regular education students in grade two through four having difficulties in reading are provided assistance from a Title I instructor or an At Risk teacher. These services are provided in the classroom if applicable or a pull out service is offered to those with greater needs. The first grade students in the district identified with reading needs may receive support from Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery has certified instructors employed by the district. There are at least two Reading Recovery teachers per elementary building in the district.

School A and B are located in a suburb of a large metropolitan area. In the district, 95.2% of the population are White-non Hispanic, 0.2% are Black, 3.5% are Hispanic, and 1.0% are Asian/Pacific Islander. The total enrollment of the district is 2,602 students. The percentage of low income is 3.8%

and 1.6% are Limited-English-Proficient. The teaching staff is 99.4% White-non Hispanic and 0.6% Asian/Pacific Islander. Female teachers make up 91.3% of the teaching staff while the other 8.7% is male. The average years of teaching experience is 11.1 with a $33,453 yearly income. The pupil-teacher ratio is 17.3:1. Of the total 176 teachers in the district 25.2% have a masters degree or beyond. The average administration salary is $70,073. The pupil to administration ratio is 260.2:1.

School C is one of five elementary schools and one junior high in the district. School C is a twenty-nine year old building that is set on one full city block. The building consists of 13 classrooms, 4 special education resource rooms, one Reading Recovery/ Resource Room, a library, gym, and music room. The staff consists of twenty-one female teachers and one male teacher.

The first grade team uses a variety of techniques to address the needs of the students. The teachers use traditional teaching methods, cooperative groups and individual instruction. The Language Arts Curriculum is based on the Silver Burdett Ser s. Trade books, poetry, Weekly Reader and Junior Great Books are used as supplementary sources. The math curriculum is based on "Math their Way" with a MacMillan text to support it.

School C has an excellent Parent Teacher Group (PTG). They supply funds and programs to the school. The PTG provides the school with special assemblies, programs, supplemental materials for classrooms and new technology for the school. The PTG is a hardworking group that does fund raisers, organizes social events

and supports the teachers. It is a commendable group and an asset to School C.

The district has acquired Silver Burdett for reading for first through eighth grade, Scott Foresman for mathematics for first through sixth grade, Macmillan/McGraw for social studies, and Scholastic for science.

The district has a gifted program called CHALLENGE, which emphasizes Language Arts. CHALLENGE is a pull-out program in grades two through six and has special classes available in the Junior High. The second through fourth grade students must score 92% or higher on the district test in either reading or math. The fifth and sixth grade students must score 92% or higher in either math, reading, or science. In conjunction with the test scores, the students must have two of the following three characteristics: a parent nomination form, a students nomination form, or teacher recommendation. The students work together in a heterogeneous grade level group on themes. The first grade students are not chosen until after the second grading period since there are no district test results. These students are identified through the previously mentioned characteristics which are not related to test scores, but they must possess all three criteria. The students of the first grade participate in a push-in program. The classroom teachers enrich the instruction for the students identified within the regular classroom.

The district has a special education program for students with learning disabilities, behavior disorders and speech and

language disorders. At this time, the students are in self-contained rooms and included in regular gym and music classes. The district also employs a speech pathologist that visits each school on a weekly basis. First grade students are able to receive Reading Recovery services to help improve their reading skills.

School C is located in a suburb of a large metropolitan area. The schools in this district are made up of three villages. In the district, 11.7% of the population is White-Non Hispanic, 86.1% are Black, 1.4% are Hispanic and 0.8 % are Asian/ Pacific Islander. The total enrollment of the district is 2,906. The percentage of low income families is 51.8% and 0.1% of the students are Limited-English-Proficient. The teaching staff is 68.7% White-non-Hispanic, 30.7 % Black-non-Hispanic and 0.6% Hispanic. Female teachers make up 87.1% of the teaching staff while the other 12.9% are male. The average years of teaching is 13.3 with a $35,313 yearly income. Of the total 163 teachers in the district, 37.4% have a Master's degree or beyond. The average administrative salary is $68,170. The pupil to administration ratio is 223.5:1. Table One includes additional information pertaining to the three schools previously mentioned. This information was gathered from the schools' report cards.

Table 1

DEMOGRAPHICS FOR SCHOOL A,B, AND C

	A	B	C	D
1	Characteristics	School A	School B	School C
2	School Population	491 students	501 students	330 students
3	Racial/Ethnic Background	98% White	95.2% White	53.9% White
4	Racial/Ethnic Background	0% Black	0% Black	40.9% Black
5	Racial/Ethnic Background	2% Hispanic	3.8% Hispanic	4.2% Hispanic
6	Racial/Ethnic Background	0% Asian/P.I.	1% Asian/P.I.	0.9% Asian/P.I.
7	Low-Income Students	3.1 %	4.4 %	52.1 %
8	Attendance	95.8 %	95.8 %	94.2 %
9	Student Mobility	7.7 %	10.8 %	18.3 %
10	Class Size	19.3 first grade	20.3 first grade	27 first grade
11	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	17.3 : 1	17.3 : 1	19.3 : 1

Source: 1996 School Report Cards from Schools A, B, and C

Description of Surrounding Community

School A and B are located in the center of the village. This village has been an incorporated village for 88 years. The village has a population of 56,182 as cited in the Census Handbook. The average single family home sold in 1993, for $131,118 with a range of $58,000 to $243,000. The average household income was $21,494. However the median income was $38,665. In 1990 the average age in the village was between 25 and 29 years old. More than 95% of the population is White-non Hispanic. This information is stated in the Village Census Handbook.

School C is mostly made up of students from a large village near a metropolitan area. The village is a small community located in the south suburbs. The village has been incorporated

since 1925. It houses several government offices, including a district courthouse and a township headquarters. According to the 1988 Village Handbook Census Report the population is 15,534. The median age is 24.5. The median household inco is $23,265 and the average home value is between $45,000 and $75,000.

National Context of the Problem

Creative writing is a concern at the state and national levels. The curricular area of writing is not appealing to most students, yet writing exposure begins early in one's life. Calkin (1986) stated, "Children view writing quite differently. For them, it is exploration with marker and pen." Educators focus on structured writing formats dictated by the state. Teachers feel pressured for time during the school day and exclude enrichment lessons, such as creative writing. Researchers point out that time constraints do not allow for writing in the curriculum. Over years of observation, teachers are seen spending two hours a day on reading, and barely any time on teaching writing (Tway, 1985). Research has indicated that teachers and schools do not often communicate a positive attitude towards writing (Calkins, 1986; Jalongo & Zeigler, 1987). Writing strategies are not modeled to students as a form of communication, but as a way to write answers. Hudelson (1989) stated, "most writing is done to prove to the teacher that an assignment has been completed."

Data has shown that when children enter first grade, about 90% believe they can write as compared to only 15% that believe they can read (Graves, 1983). Children should experience many opportunities to explore different forms of writing. It

appears that many students enter school with positive attitudes about writing, but after years of academic writing they learn to despise writing. Often students lose ownership of writing when they are only writing for the teacher. Students need confidence in their writing so that they will continue to experiment with the writing process and become flexible writers. When it is essential for a child to develop into a successful writer parents and teachers need to encourage and support, which has not been evident. The truth is that the children can write, but often adults do not believe that young children can actually write (Calkins, 1986). If a poor attitude is developed then not only is the writing career affected, but reading too. "A student not only learns to read by reading and write by writing but they also learn to read by writing and write by reading (Goodman and Goodman, 1983).

Writing is an ongoing problem in schools today. We intend to show that improving and teaching creative writing will help to make children have confidence and be able to become flexible writers. They will not be inhibited when writing for themselves or the teacher.

CHAPTER 2

Problem Evidence

Through teacher and student surveys, the extent of the teacher's and student's views towards creative writing will be noted. Student writing behaviors will be observed and documented through a teacher checklist during the allotted creative writing time. A collection of student's work will be scored by a teacher made rubric and placed in a portfolio. A random sample of student's pre and post surveys will be analyzed. The implemented creative writing program will occur over an eight week period in first and forth grade classrooms.

The survey was distributed to thirty-three teachers; 18% do not set aside time for creative writing. The outcome of the survey suggested 79% of teachers view creative writing as an essential part of the curriculum and a way of assisting students in becoming flexible writers. Of the fifty-four percent of the teachers surveyed, most of them devote 30-180 minutes to creative writing per week. The results indicate that 54% of teachers grade their students' creative writing; 67% with a rubric, 17% subjective, 11% positive comments, and 5% give points.

The following table addresses the results from the surveys given to the teachers of the participating schools. One will note that the table displays the results of the complete survey.

Table 2

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Traits of Writing	Creative Writing	Instructed Writing		
2	Grades	8	32		
3	Prompts	24	28		
4	Structure	8	30		
5	Illustrations	32	14		
6	Curriculum Based	17	32		
7		Yes	No		
8	Time Allotted	26	6		
9	Flexible Writers	26	2		
10		Yes	No	Subjective	Rubric
11	Writing Graded	15	11	3	12
12		0-1 hour per wk.	1-2 hours per wk.	2-3 hours per wk.	
13	Wtg. Time in Class	11	11	1	

All three targeted classes participated in the student survey, which Tables 3 and 4 address. Thirty-nine percent of the students prefer to be given a topic from the teacher. As recorded from a scale of one to four, 42% of the students stated that it was difficult to create an idea for writing. Students cited that time involved in creating a finished product and length of a writing assignment are the main reasons why they dislike writing. More practice was viewed as the leading advantage to make them better writers.

During the eight week period, the random sample's writing behaviors were observed and documented by checklist. The checklist's purpose was to note differences in the students' writing styles. The checklist was designed to display the multiple aspects of the writing process. The checklist is an organized way to identify structure and organization.

The pre and post survey was given to all three classes. The surveys were given to the students to complete independently. It was found that during the pre survey the students enjoy writing. The students had a positive outlook of their writing skills. The majority of the students felt that thinking of their own ideas was difficult for them. Journal writing was a favorite activity for most students. Tables Three and Four represent more information gathered from the pre surveys given to the first and fourth grade students.

Table 3

STUDENT PRE SURVEY RESULTS FROM THE FIRST GRADE

	A	B	C
1	Questions	Yes	No
2	I am a good writer.	44	3
3	Wtg. is hard for me.	22	24
4	Think of ideas is hard.	15	32
5	Like wtg. in journal.	45	2
6	Ways to Be Better		
7	More Time	21	
8	More Ideas	3	
9	More Practice	12	
10	More Teacher Help	11	
11	Think of Topic	36	
12	Teacher Gives Topic	19	

Table 4

STUDENT PRE SURVEY RESULTS FROM THE FOURTH GRADE

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Questions	Easy	Creativity	Communicate Ideas	Express Feelings
2	Like About Wtg.?	7	5	6	2
3		Length	Think of Ideas	Given Topic	Grammar
4	Dislike About Wtg.?	16	5	3	5
5					
6	Traits to be Wnter				
7	More Time	19			
8	More Student Examples	5			
9	More Practice	24			
10	More Teacher Examples	5			
11					
12	Think of Ideas	1 Easy	2	3	4 Hard
13	Number of Students	6	11	4	4
14					
15	Like Better	Your Topic	Teacher's Topic		
16	Number of Students	16	9		
17					
18	Journals	Yes	No		
19	Enjoy wtg. in Journal	16	8		

Probable Causes

In analyzing the context, one can note that the two school districts participating in this research have similarities and considerable differences. One possible cause of the perceived need of creative writing improvement is the mobility of the students. Schools A and B have a rate average of 9.25%. School C has a rate of 18.3% This cause is relevant because students are losing consistency of writing instruction. Another possible cause of the perceived need of creative writing improvement is the low-income status. Schools A and B have an average low income status of 3.75% while School C has a low income status of 52.1%. This cause is pertinent because many of the students do not have the same background experience.

The references suggest various causes for the perceived need of creative writing improvement. According to Smith (1982), children stop writing because they lose interest. This loss permits the writers to view a blank page as a challenge. A second cause is that children develop a poor attitude toward writing. Routman (1991) states, "we have been conditioned by our traditional schooling to view writing as an assignment by and for the teacher." (p. 161) A poor student attitude towards writing hinders their ability to be flexible writers. A third cause is lack of teacher innovation. When writing is taught teachers emphasize mechanics, spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, width of margins, and so on, with little attention to development or style (Silberman, 1970). Teachers can not expect

students to become creative writers unless there is abundant modeling done in the classroom. A last possible cause is limited time devoted to writing. Regardless of the stage of writing, all writers need practice to develop fluency. "For years, I'd watched teachers spend two hours a day on the teaching of reading and barely any time on the teaching of writing" (Calkins, 1983, p.152-153).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The resources consulted support various causes for the need of creative writing improvement. One cause is the lack of interest on the student's behalf. The students loose interest due to difficulty with creating topics to write about. The second cause involves the student's poor attitude toward writing. The intensive corrections given by the teacher on all writing assignments lessen the student's desire to produce more writing samples. The third cause falls on the shoulders of the teacher. The lack of teacher modeling creates an atmosphere of apprehensive writers. The final cause deals with the time factor. There are many objectives that must be met within the school year, which drives the day to day activities and diminishes creative writing.

Children need to discover how writing connects to their own lives. Students will develop interest when they are given a topic that matters to them (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1993). An interesting topic will motivate a child to develop a creative thought and write about it. One way to connect writing to the real world is to use oral narrative stories. If you can say it, you can write it. "If kids can communicate orally, teachers can use that to convince them that they do have something to write

about" (Frank, 1979). Writing is perceived as fun or enjoyable when the interest level is raised through personal topics. Writers' block is eliminated when students are taught how to develop ideas and about where they come from. According to Routman, children should be encouraged that what has happened to them is worth writing about. When the problem of what to write about is cured, the students can grow into authors.

Students' attitudes toward writing change throughout their academic careers. "Children's strong early foundation in writing continues to have an impact on their writing development and attitudes towards writing" (Routman, 1991) . They enter school attempting to communicate in written form through notes, lists, and word games. Their creativity is stifled through mindless worksheets, handwriting, and spelling drills. According to Cunningham, 1994, the difficult challenge faced by the intermediate teacher of at-risk learners is not only to develop positive attitudes toward reading and writing, but also to transform the negative and often hostile attitudes that these children bring along with them. Poor attitudes develop in students when teachers assign activities that are not challenging. "It is vital that teachers listen to children and learn the particular language activities and needs they bring to school..." (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1993).

Teachers must help students find real purposes about which to write. According to Frank, teacher's enthusiasm is the #1 motivator of writing. Children view teachers as their guide in the writing process. "We believe that teacher demonstration of

the steps of the writing process is the critical factor in establishing successful writers..." (Cunningham, 1994). If the classroom climate is established as a risk-free environment, students will benefit from the support and feedback of peers. The teacher must be a writing model by demonstrating the process and daring to take risks before (s)he can expect the same of their students. The teachers should establish creativity within their modeling of writing to inspire creative authors. In view of current research, teacher training is sadly inadequate. Staff training is critical for the upbringing of innovative teachers.

Time is an essential part of the writing process on behalf of both teacher and student. Cunningham mentioned, "time is the most precious commodity any teacher has, and like money there is never enough of it." Teachers need to effectively utilize their time between reading and writing. "Providing time each day for children to write about anything they choose accepting and encouraging their beginning effects and providing some time for children to read what they have written is usually all the motivation that children need" (Cunningham, 1994).

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND PROCESSES

As a result of increased opportunity to write, teacher modeling and Daily Oral Language during the period of September, 1997 to December, 1997, the first and fourth grade students of the targeted classes will increase their ability to write creatively, as measured by rubrics and self-evaluation reviews of student portfolio.

PROCESS STATEMENTS

In order to accomplish the terminal objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. Utilize opportunities to model the writing process giving examples of the thought that takes place.
2. Model writing though Daily Oral Language.
3. Shared language experiences that increases knowledge of left to right orientation,return sweep, and proper editing.
4. Set aside one thirty minute lesson a week for the development of creative writing, allowing expression of creativity with and without prompts.
5. Organize writing products in file folders served as portfolios.

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

The targeted first and fourth grade classes will show improvement in creative writing through varied outcomes. One would be to master left to right orientation and return sweep in the writing process. Another achievement would be to improve proper editing skills within writing.

ACTION PLAN

I. Daily Oral Language

A. Purpose

1. proper editing
2. sentences structure

B. Steps for first grade

1. teacher dictates sentence
2. students recite sentence
3. teacher and students record sentence
4. students attend to sentence structure
5. teacher collects and reviews student work

C. Steps for fourth grade

1. pre-written sentence on chalkboard
2. students work independently on corrections of sentence structure
3. teacher orally reviews corrections
4. teacher collects and reviews student work

II. Modeling

A. Daily Oral Language

B. Shared Writing Experiences

1. students collectively dictate story
2. teacher records and models correct sentence structure and proper editing
3. students reread orally story
4. students identify familiar words and punctuation

C. Brainstorming

1. choose idea for writing
2. choose graphic organizer
    a. teacher selects graphic organizer
    b. teacher models use

III. Creative Writing

A. Lesson One

1. teacher informed students about the creative writing sessions
2. teacher distributed student surveys
3. students completed and returned the surveys

B. Lesson Two

1. introduction: discussed what an imagination is and how it is used; teacher supplied students with different media
    a. feather
    b. leaf
    c. popscicle stick
    d. tissue paper in shape of squares
    e. construction paper
    f. yarn
    g. macaroni
2. prewriting: students created a design with these items
3. writing: students wrote a description for their design

C. Lesson Three

1. introduction: teacher discussed picture books
2. prewriting: teacher shared picture book, Tuesday, with the students
3. writing: students predicted what would happen next Tuesday
4. teacher assembled students work into a class book

D. Lesson Four

1. introduction: teacher used a t-chart format to compare physical and emotional hurt; teacher supplied each student with a real Band-Aid
2. prewriting: students recalled a time when they got hurt
3. writing: students explained about a time when they got hurt
4. students predicted how they can prevent being hurt again

E. Lesson Five

1. introduction: teacher orally read the story Gregory, the Terrible Eater
2. prewriting: class distinguished between junk food and healthy food in a t-chart format while recalling facts from the story
3. writing: students wrote a description of a meal for Gregory
4. students illustrated and colored his meal

F. Lesson Six

1. introduction: teacher described real and make-believe animal situations
2. prewriting: teacher distributed picture for students to view
3. writing: students imagined what the animals were doing

G. Lesson Seven

1. introduction: teacher described components of an invitation
2. prewriting: students classified different invitations
3. writing: students applied the principle of invitation writing

H. Lesson Eight

1. introduction: teacher and class described underwater creatures
2. prewriting: teacher distributed paper for writing and students speculated what could be under the water
3. writing: students illustrated and described an underwater scene

I. Lesson Nine

1. introduction: teacher and class described creatures with eyes and their purpose
2. prewriting: teacher distributed paper for writing and students speculated what the eyes are looking at and to whom they belong
3. writing: students illustrated and described a creature to whom the eyes belong

J. Lesson Ten

1. introduction: teacher discussed purpose of a postcard
2. prewriting: teacher described format of a postcard
3. writing: students applied the principle of postcard writing

J. Lesson Eleven

1. teacher distributed student surveys
2. students completed and returned the surveys

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, a survey will be developed. To evaluate the writing samples a scoring rubric will be devised. The teacher utilizes a checklist to note student's progress. Portfolios with a self-evaluation of student work will be kept throughout the writing process.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve creative writing. Prior to implementation, the researchers administered a survey to teachers and students. See Appendix A for the teacher's survey, Appendix B for the first grade student's survey, and Appendix C for the fourth grade student's survey. The implementation of Daily Oral Language, shared writing experiences, brainstorming, and creative writing lessons were selected to effect the desired changes.

Daily Oral Language was used to teach correct punctuation and capitalization. This process began the first week of school and continued through the intervention. It was completed as a whole group activity upon arrival to school. Corrections were modeled by the teacher and the students recorded corrections. The lessons were employed five times a week in each class. Sample lessons from both grade levels can be found in Appendices D and E.

Shared writing experience was used to model sentence structure and editing. This process began the third week of school and continued through the intervention. They were done as a whole group experience with the teacher recording and modeling correct sentence structure on chart paper in the first grade settings. They were completed as a whole group experience with a

teacher led discussion on correct sentence structure with the students participating in the fourth grade setting. This was done as an introduction to the brainstorming process. These lessons were employed eight times.

Brainstorming was used to organize ideas for writing. This process began the third week of school and continued through the intervention. This was conducted as the anticipatory set for the writing lesson. These lessons were performed as a whole group experience and employed eight times.

The writing lessons were presented in eight instructional sessions. This process began the third week of school and continued through the intervention. The lessons began as a shared writing experience followed by brainstorming as a whole group. Through teacher guidance, the students independently incorporated higher order thinking skills within their writing activities. Sample lessons can be found in Appendices F - J. These writing lessons were scored by a teacher made rubric. Each grade level had a personalized rubric. See Appendix K for the first grade rubric and see Appendix L for the fourth grade rubric.

In reflection to the writing lessons, the students completed a post survey. The first grade students were interviewed to complete the survey while the fourth grade students completed their surveys independently. The majority of the students felt that thinking of their own ideas was easier after the intervention. One can note on Tables Five and Six that the Invitation and Postcard activities were favorites. See Appendix M for the post survey.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of the creative writing lessons, students were given a survey on the last day of the intervention. This data is presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5

STUDENT POST SURVEY RESULTS FROM THE FIRST GRADE

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Better Writer	capitals 1	spacing 1	listening 1	spelling 1			
2	Favorite Piece	imagination 2	invitation 2	postcard 2	animal antics 1	eyes 1	ouch 1	plate 1
3	Easier to think of own ideas	Yes 10	No 0					
4	Write about your own idea	8						
5	Write about teacher's idea	2						

Table 6

STUDENT POST SURVEY RESULTS FROM THE FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS

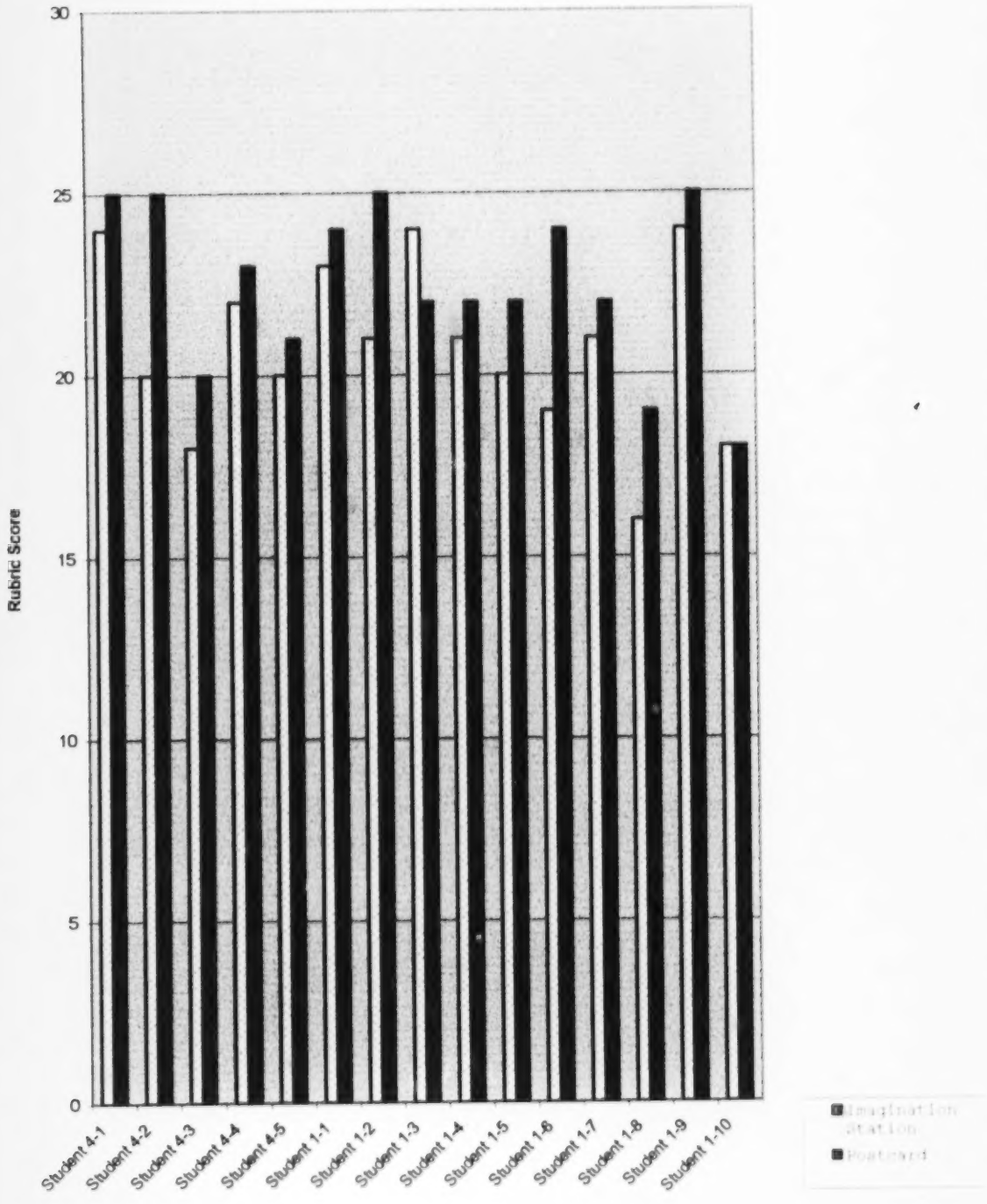
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Better Writer	creative 1	handwriting 1	concentrate 1	organize 2	
2	Favorite Piece	sea 1	invitation 1	postcard 1	Tuesday 1	eyes 1
3	Easier to think of own ideas	Yes 5	No 0			
4	Write about your own idea	2				
5	Write about teacher's idea	3				

The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on the students involved. They viewed several skills as being important to becoming a good writer. These skills can be put into three general categories: prewriting, mechanics, and improvement over time. All of the lessons were represented on the surveys as a favorite piece from the students. All of the students found that it is easy for them now to think of their own ideas. The survey indicated that the students gained confidence with their writing ability.

In order to assess the students' growth and progress a rubric was used to score the writing projects. This data is displayed in Table 7. One would note that all students except for two showed growth. Student 1-3 scored higher on the first lesson compared to the final lesson. This could be due to the leniency and the researcher's interpretation of the rubric. Also, student 1-10 showed no growth when comparing the first and last lesson. This could be due to his resistance to the interventions. The remaining 13 students' scores display success. This table does not display the growth of the other 66 students included in the intervention.

Table 7

STUDENT WORK SAMPLES SCORED BY THE RUBRIC



Let it be known, that all students showed growth at some point during the intervention. This table only represents the scores from the first and last lessons.

In order to assess the effects of creative writing the teachers completed a checklist reflecting the students work habits. See Appendix N for checklist used in collecting data. The behaviors the teachers were looking for can be put into two general categories of structure and organization. These students' writing structure improved over the intervention. In the first grade students progressed from using letters only to recognizable words in sentence form. In the fourth grade students progressed from phrases to sentence form. Organization of their writing, overall, remained the same. The checklist noted that the start time for writing has increased. The process of drawing a picture first and writing a story second has reversed to writing a story first and drawing a picture second after the implemented creative writing program. Overall, the checklist displayed crucial information for the teacher's purpose.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on creative writing, the students showed a marked improvement. The creative writing activities, as performed in the study, provided students the opportunity to write on a daily basis, practice editing skills, organize their thoughts, utilize Higher Order Thinking Skills, and observe the writing process as modeled by the teacher. The non-threatening environment encouraged the students to express their thoughts and ideas without the fear of

the "red pen". Furthermore, educators need to serve as role models for the students and encourage creative writing. Educators need to devote time to allow children to write creatively. Given time and encouragement students will show a greater interest in creative writing. The findings of this study help to demonstrate the need for implementation of a creative writing program to promote interest and confidence in the writing process.

As a result of this study the teachers recommend implementing a creative writing program to enhance the students writing ability. Looking back over the implementation, the teachers would revise the rubric to be more specific and to show more growth. The teachers found the rubric to be too generous with points, and open to multiple interpretations. During the implementation, the teachers were presented with a rubric used by the teachers of Kentucky. This rubric can be found in Appendix O. The teachers would suggest the use of teacher made lessons versus published materials. Although published materials were of interest, the teachers felt the creativity was limited. Regardless of noted changes, the teachers were satisfied with the project.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Teacher Survey

Please take the time to fill out this survey for our research project. Your input will add in the data collection for our final product. Thank you in advance for your time and expertise!

Lisa Calantone
Melanie Cunningham - Wetmore
Jennifer Dreznes

Grade Level _____

1. What characteristics do you associate with creative and instructed writing:

	Creative	Instructed
Grades		
Prompts		
Structure		
Pictures /Illustrations		
Curriculum based		

2. Do you have a special time allotted in your curriculum for creative writing? _____

** If yes, continue. If no, then stop here and return survey.

3. How much time do you devote to creative writing in your classroom? _____

4. Do you grade your students creative writing? _____ If so, how? Subjectively? Rubric? Other?

5. Do you view creative writing as an essential part in assisting students in becoming flexible writers?

_____

_____

Appendix B

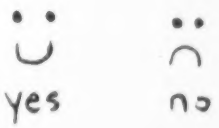
All About Writing

1. I am a good writer.

2. Writing is hard for me.

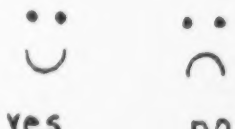
3. What will help you become a better writer?
   a. more time
   b. more ideas
   c. more practice
   d. more teacher help

4. Is it hard for you to think of your own ideas.



5. Which do you like better?
   a. writing about your own idea
   b. writing about your teacher's idea

6. I like writing in a journal.



Appendix C

Your Opinion

1. What do you like about writing?

_____

_____

2. What do you dislike about writing?

_____

_____

3. Choose two (2) items that you think help you to be a better writer.

a. more time
b. more student examples
c. more practice
d. more teacher examples

4. On a scale of 1-4, is it easy or hard for you to think of your own idea to write about? (Place an "x" on the line)

|——————————————————————————————|

easy (1) hard (4)

5. Which do you like better?

a. writing on a topic you think of
b. writing on a topic your teacher thinks of

6. Do you enjoy writing in a journal?

_____

Appendix D

First Grade Daily Oral Language

-Teacher dictates sentence using targeted high frequency word or vocabulary word.

-Whole class repeats sentence.

-Teacher models proper writing format, left to right, return sweep, rereading and proper punctuation.

-As teacher writes on the board, students write the dictated sentence in the journal notebooks, rereading to self monitor after each new word.

-After completing the sentence students locate the targeted word and use it in their own sentence.

-As the students are writing sentences they are reminded to write left to right, use return sweep, and reread their sentence after each new word to self monitor.

Sample Lesson:

Teacher: The mouse came out of our room.

Students: repeat

Teacher: "When we start a sentence we always start on the left side of the paper. I'm going to start my sentence with a capital letter, that's how we always start a sentence. The... now go back and read what you have so far, What are we going to say next? The mouse... go back reread and think what will come next. The mouse came..." The teacher continues the same process until the sentence is complete emphasizing the ending punctuation. "Circle the word came, use that word in your own story. Remember where to start and which way you go after that ... don't forget to check your punctuation."

Appendix E

Fourth Grade Daily Oral Language

1. The teacher has the Daily Oral Language sentence written on the blackboard prior to students' arrival.

2. The students organize themselves upon arrival to school.

3. The students copy the sentence written on the blackboard making corrections where necessary.

4. The teacher will read the sentence orally when everyone has completed their corrections.

5. The class works together on making the corrections to the sentence on the blackboard.

6. The students correct their paper if necessary.

* An example sentence used for Daily Oral Language.

ann was not a best contestant even though she wore her sneakers and one therd prize

Appendix F

Tuesday Creative Writing Lesson Paper

Name_____

Next Tuesday...

*

Appendix G

Ouch Creative Writing Lesson Paper

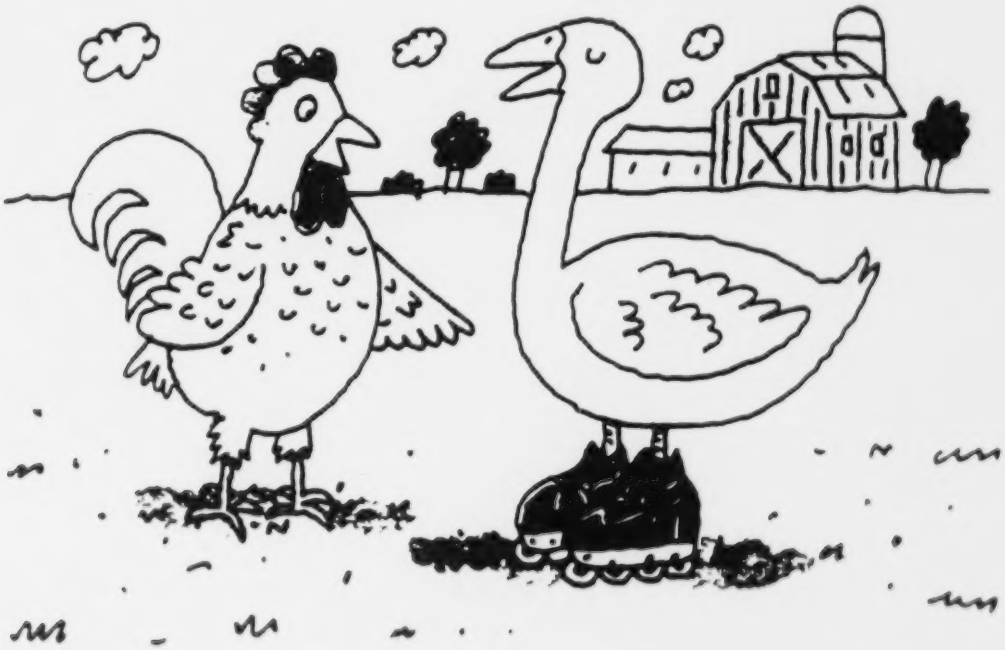
Name____ _____

"Ouch"

Appendix H

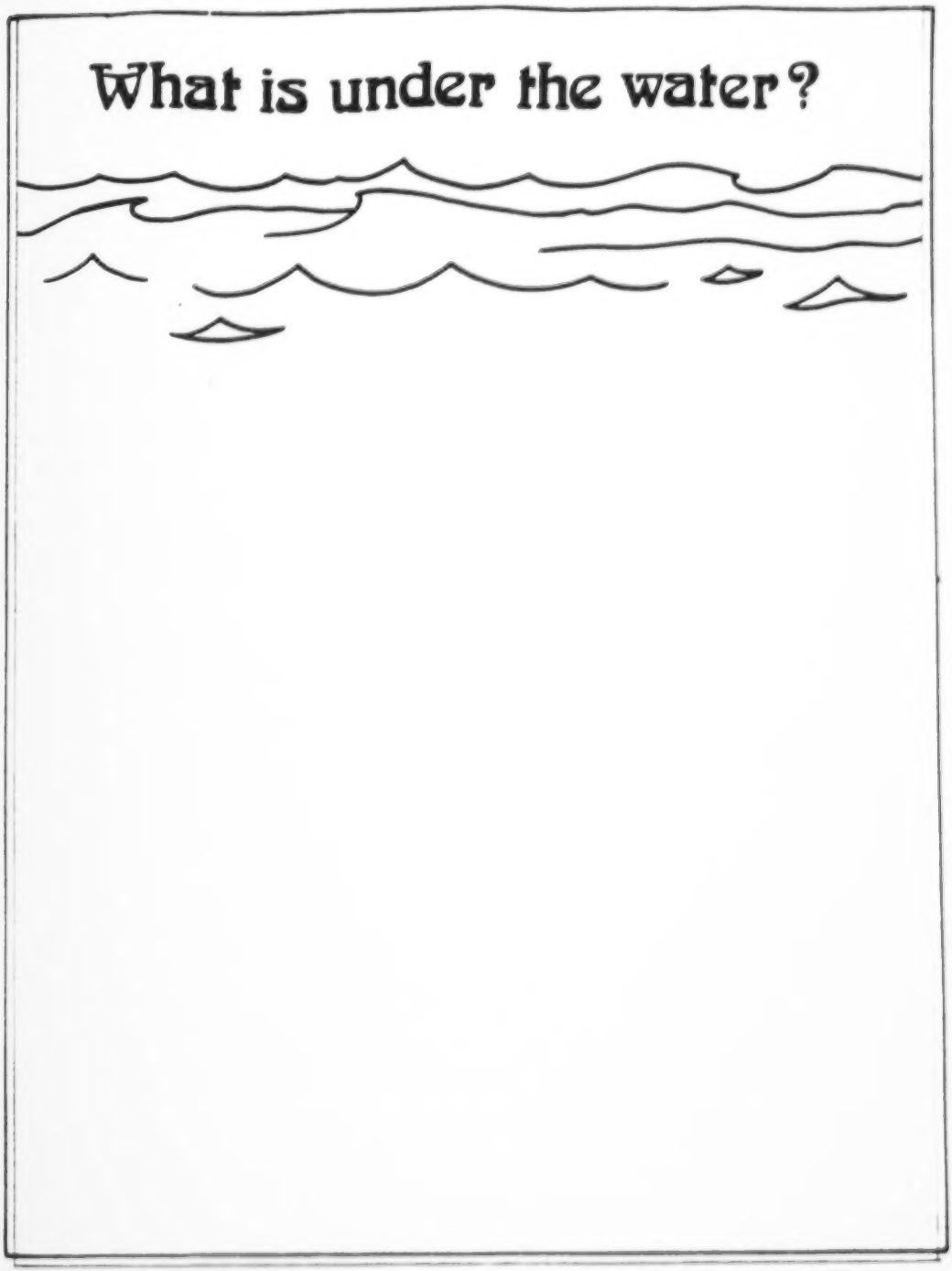
Animal Antics Creative Writing Lesson

Name _____



Appendix I

Underwater Creatures Creative Writing Lesson



Appendix J

What Are the Eyes are Looking At Creative Writing Lesson

To whom or what do these eyes belong?

What are they looking at?

Why?

Appendix K

Rubric for Creative Writing in the 1st Grade

Characteristics	First Base (3)	Double (4)	Homerun (5)
Length number of words	0 - 3	4 - 8	9 - 14
Illustrations	*No Color *No Relation to Story	*Color *Relates to Story	*Color *Relates to Story *Labled Pictures *Neat
Time	*Wrote Name on Paper	*You Can Start a Story	*You Can Start and Finish a Story
Idea	*Tells about one idea	*Tells about one idea with details	*Tells about more than one idea with details
Fluency makes sense	*Doesn't Sound Right	*Makes Good Sense/Sounds Good	*Sounds Great/ Time Order

Total Points 25

A 25 - 23
B 22 - 20
C 19 - 18
D 17 - 15
F 14 -0

Appendix L

Rubric for Creative Writing in the 4th Grade

Characteristics	First Base (3)	Double (4)	Homerun (5)
Length number of words	0 - 10	11 - 21	22 - 33
Illustrations	*No Color *No Relation to Story	*Color *Relates to Story	*Color *Relates to Story *Labled Pictures *Neat
Time	*Wrote Name on Paper	*You Can Start a Story	*You Can Start and Finish a Story
Idea	*Tells about one idea	*Tells about one idea with details	*Tells about more than one idea with details
Fluency makes sense	*Doesn't Sound Right	*Makes Good Sense/Sounds Good	*Sounds Great/ Time Order

Total Points 25

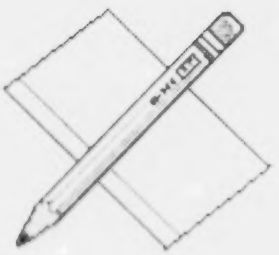
A 25 - 23
B 22 - 20
C 19 - 18
D 17 - 15
F 14 -0

Appendix M
Afterthought

1. What have you learned to be a better writer?

_____

_____



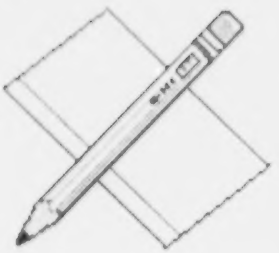
2. My favorite piece is _____

because _____

_____

3. It is easier for me to think of my own ideas now.

YES NO



4. Which do you like better?

a. writing about your own idea

b. writing about your teacher's idea

5. Additional thoughts . . .

_____

_____

_____

Appendix N

Checklist for Observation

Lesson _____ Date_____

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	**Looking for . . .**	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5
2	Starts Writing					
3	Pictures Only					
4	Labels Pictures					
5	Letters Only					
6	Upper/Lower Case					
7	Recognizable Words					
8	Phrases					
9	Spacing btwn. Words					
10	Spacing btwn. Sent.					
11	Sentence Form					
12	Correct Punctuation					
13	Draws Pik First					
14	Writes Story First					

Kentucky Writing Rubric

	Novice	Apprentices	Proficient	Distinguished
Awareness of audience/ purpose				
idea development	huh ?	OK. I see but I need more.	Very clear message	Beautiful message
organization	loose pieces	Some ideas fit together. Need more pieces	ideas fit together	special fit
sentences wording	And the dog.	I like my dog. I love my dog.	My favorite thing about Snoopy is his friendly bark.	Snoopy, with his friendly bark, wiggles all over when he's happy to see me.
surface features	(uses) .	(uses) . ? !	(uses) . ? ! " ")	(uses) . ? ! " " ... :) —)